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The Advent

Get out of your mind
to have the true Intelligence.
Get out of your sensations
to have the true feelings.
Get out of your sensitiveness
to have the true dynamism.

THE MOTHER

The ADVENT

August 1953

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Slowly the Light grows greater in the East,
Slowly the world progresses on God's road.
His seal is on my task, it cannot fail:
I shall hear the silver swing of heaven's gates
When God comes out to meet the soul of the world.

SRI AUROBINDO
(Savitri Book VII, Canto IV)

Vol. X. No. 3 August 1953

THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

THE YOGIC CENTRES

THERE are, of course, the seven well-known yoga-centres in the human body. They are, beginning from below, (1) the end of the spine, (2) the lower abdomen, (3) the navel (4) the heart, (5) the throat, (6) between the eye-brows, and (7) the crown of the head. But there are others extending from below the spine which are not so well-known. It is true, however, that the centres in the individual being end with the spine; what is below belongs more to the universal nature. There is a centre above and beyond the crown; there is also, on the other side, a centre below and away from under the feet. The yoga-centres are centres of consciousness and energy; they are the sources of the various types and qualities of consciousness and energy—they indicate the many planes of consciousness-energy. There are people who actually feel that their force and strength come from below, as if these stream into them like a spring from under the feet. This

* Based on the Mother's Talks.

region from below the spine end to the feet is that of the subconscient and what extends further down is the domain of the inconscient. We may distinguish five more centres in this lower or infra-spinal region apart from the spine end itself (*mulādhāra*) (1) the knee, (2) the leg, (3) the feet, (4) the sole of the foot and (5) below the feet. That would make the total number of centres as twelve—the mystic number for completeness or integrality.

The centre at the bottom of the spine, which is the basis of the individual consciousness is seen as a serpent—a serpent coiled up and asleep, with perhaps just the head sticking up in a very somnolent manner. It represents the normal human consciousness, bottled up, narrow, ignorant, asleep; human energy, too, at this level is obscure and mechanical, extremely limited. The whole energy potential, the consciousness-force is locked up in the physical body consciousness. Now the serpent does not remain asleep forever. It has to wake up, it wakes up. That is to say, man's consciousness awakes, grows and rises upward. The serpent one day shakes its head, lifts it up a little more, begins to sway its hood, as if trying to throw off the sleep and look about. It slowly uncoils itself and rises more and more. It rises and passes through the centres one by one, becomes more and more awake, gathers new light and potency at each centre. Finally, fully awakened, it rises to its full height, erect, straight like a rod, its tail end at the bottom of the spine and its hood touching the crown of the man's head. The man is then the fully awakened, the perfectly self-conscious man. The movement does not stop there, however; for the serpent presses further on, it strikes with its hood the bottom of the crown and in the end breaks through and passes beyond like a flash of lightning. One need not fear the break through, there is no actual, physical breaking or fracture of the skull. Although it is said that once you have gone over and beyond your head, you are not likely to return, you go for good. In other words, the body does not hold together very long after the experience, it drops and dies. And yet it need not be so; it is not the whole truth. For when you have gone beyond, you can come back too, carrying the superconscient light with you. That is to say, the serpent, now luminous,—pure and free energy—can enter the body again, this time with its head down and the tail up. It enters blazing, illumining with its superconscient light the centres one by one, giving man richer and richer consciousness, energy and life, transforming the being more and more. The Light comes down easily enough to the heart region; there the difficulty begins, the regions below gradually become darker and denser and it is hard task for the Light to penetrate as it goes further down. If

succeeds in reaching the bottom of the spine, it has achieved something miraculous. But there is a further progress necessary, if man—and the world with him—is to realise a wholly transformed supraconscient life. In other words, the Light must touch and enter not only the physical stratum of our being but the others too that lie below, the subconscient and inconscient. That has been till now a sealed dungeon, something impossible to approach and tackle.

And yet it is not an impossibility. Not only it is not impossible, we have to make it possible. Not only so, man's destiny demands that it should be inevitable. If man is to be a transformed being, if he is to incarnate here below something of the Divine Reality, if his social life on earth is to be the expression of the light and harmony of the Spirit Consciousness, then he has to descend into these nether regions, break open the nethermost as he has done in regard to the uppermost and unite the two.

Here is a curious story about man and his destiny. What is he, the normal man? He is a slave, a bond slave. He may have the illusion that he has ideas and movements, his own, he has even free scope to put them to execution. But it will not take long to discover that it is an illusion, a great deception. His plans do not mature, his efforts beat against an iron wall. The more he observes and sees things squarely he finds that he is bound hand and foot. He is driven by forces and things over which he has no control whatsoever. He is a slave to circumstances; he is checked by the will of others. His own will has no power or scope; it is wholly ineffectual. He feels more and more a great burden pressing upon the back of the head bending it down, a heavy weight lies upon his shoulders. He somehow trudges on like a beast of burden. He has no free choice or will; his wishes and desires are not consulted. He is driven helplessly on.

But the story does not end here. Man can, if he chooses, alter the situation, turn the tables. He has in him the source of freedom—what he vaguely feels in his outer consciousness; there is a centre from where he is capable of reacting and reasserting. It is the centre where lies his *dharma*, the law of his being. It is his soul. If he once comes in contact with that, makes that the base of his life, he is free from that moment. He holds his head erect. He is no longer bent down. The burden of inexorable circumstances weighs no more on him. He has transcended the circumstances, he stands over them, looks over them. He is now the master and they obey him, he has not to obey them.

This consummation is supremely effected when there is the double

breaking of the barrier I was speaking about. The first is the piercing of the veil above, when the consciousness rises into the superconscient, takes the human being into the divine being; the second is the rending of the lower veil and the descent of the divine consciousness into the most material, the subconscient and the inconscient, realising the divine life on earth.

THE HOMOGENEOUS BEING

A thing is homogeneous when all its parts are similar, are *like itself*; in other words, when the whole being is under the same influence, moved by the same consciousness, the same impulsion, the same will. Normally a man is formed of many kinds of fragments, all disparate, each becoming active in its turn at different moments. A part may become active so different from the previous one that the man seems altogether a new person. Each element in us has its own nature and activity, demands its own fulfilment, acts almost as an independent personality. We are composed indeed of multiple personalities.

Thus, for example, you are now in a very good state of consciousness. You have the feeling that you really live for an ideal, for the Divine and are happy. Suddenly something happens; you meet someone, not very desirable, or you do something, not commendable, or you are in the midst of some untoward circumstances and you find you have lost your experience, so much so that you may even lose the memory of it. You wonder how this could have happened. A submerged part of your being has come up, an element that lay aside is now in front: it has come overshadowing or pushing the other into the background.

There are many examples of such double, triple, quadruple or multiple personality. The separate personalities are not conscious of each other, each acts independently and goes its own way. They live together, but do not mix or mingle with each other; they are contained in the same body, that is the only connection. It is like a sack in which pebbles and pearls—if they are indeed real pearls—have been thrown together and the only bond of union is the sack. This is not homogeneity; this is called heterogeneity.

I knew a person who had a will, a clarity of thought and ideas, who prepared intelligently all that needed to be done with regard to a particular work. All on a sudden there was a reversal of the whole being. Another person surged up who not only did not continue the work of his predecessor, but

undid it all. He destroyed in 10 minutes what took months for the other to build up. And you can understand the dismay of the first person when he came back and saw the havoc done: he had to start over again.

What then one should do? What is the remedy?

You have to find out in you a seat of consciousness, a signpost firmly planted, deep inside, which is at the same time a mirror. All things, all happenings must pass in front of the mirror; they will be reflected there in their true nature, exactly as they are in their truth and not as they appear or pretend to be. And according to their nature and quality you are to give them places around; the signpost will show where each has to go for its place. The Mirror will judge and test each sentiment, each impulse, each sensation that comes up. If it is pleasant, if it is luminous, if it is what it should be, give it a place near the centre. If, on the other hand, if it is grey, obscure, doubtful, put it away, farther off. If, by chance, any of the unpleasant elements has forced its way up and occupied a near seat, you must warn it sternly and remove it, give it its appropriate seat; when it has recognised itself, changed itself, then only it can be allowed within a nearer ring. It is in this way that you should arrange and group all the elements of your being, according to the value and quality of each one around the central consciousness. That is how you organise your being. You build up a pattern of concentric rings, the nearer the ring to the centre, the purer must be the elements that compose it and therefore of greater value and significance. If you can arrange in this way all the parts and parcels of your being around the psychic centre, each in its own place according to its role and function and all turned towards the central consciousness and inspired and moved by it and there is no element which sounds a differing note, then you have the perfect homogeneity of your nature.

It is a very interesting exercise in which you can engage yourself. If you take it up and follow regularly and assiduously, you will amuse yourself immensely and with profit. Time will never hang heavy, it will bear golden fruits. At the end, say of two or three years, you will see, if you look back, how much you have changed, you wonder how you could have thought or acted as you did. You find yourself a considerably changed personality. You can start the experiment from today itself and see how life becomes more and more amusing, interesting and significant.

1-4-1953

SINCERITY IS VICTORY

To be sincere and to be candid are not the same thing. To be candid means a simplicity based, in a large measure, upon an ignorance of things. A child is candid, because he is simple and ignorant and hides nothing; he is incapable of it and has no will to deceive anyone. But sincerity is different.

Sincerity is a most difficult thing to have, but it is also the most effective of things. If you have sincerity, you are sure of victory. But it must be true sincerity. Sincerity means that all the elements of your being, all its movements, each and every one, from the most spiritual to the most physical, from the inmost to the outermost, from the topmost to the bottom-most, all parts, severally and wholly and equally are turned to the Divine, they ask for nothing else than the Divine, they live for and by the Divine.

And it is not an easy thing. To be sincere in a part, to be sincere on the whole, to be sincere at moments is easy enough; everybody can have or achieve that much. It is within the capacity of any human being with normal good will, to be sincere in his psychic movements, even if these are rare. But to be sincere in the very cells of your physical body is a still rarer and arduous achievement. To make the body cells so one-pointed that they too feel they cannot live but for the Divine and in and through the Divine. That is true sincerity and that is what you must have.

First you must observe that there is not a day in your life, not an hour, not even a minute when you have not got to rectify or intensify your sincerity. I do not say that you deceive the Divine. None can deceive the Divine, not even the greatest of the Asuras. When you have understood that, still then you will always find moments in your everyday life when you try to deceive yourself. Almost automatically you bring forward reasons in favour of whatever you do. I do not speak of grosser things as when you have quarrelled with a person, for example, and in your anger throw the whole blame upon him. I knew a child who gave a good blow to the door, because it thought the door was at fault. It is always the other party who is in the wrong. But even when you have passed beyond this baby stage, when you are supposed to be a little more reasonable, you do the stupidest of things and produce reasons in self-justification. The real test of sincerity, the very minimum of true sincerity lies here; in your reaction to a given situation, whether you can take automatically the right attitude and do exactly the thing to be done. When, for example, one speaks angrily to you, do you

catch the contagion and become angry on your side also or are you able to maintain an unshakable calm and lucidity, see the other man's point or behave as one should?

This is, I say, the very beginning of sincerity, its rudiments. And if you look into you with keener eyes, you will discover thousands of insincerities, more subtle, none the less seizable. Try to be sincere, occasions will multiply when you catch yourself insincere: you will know how difficult a thing it is. You say you belong to the Divine, to the Divine alone and to nothing or to nobody else; "it is the Divine who moves me and does everything in me". And then you do whatever pleases you; you use the Divine as a cloak to cover your indulgence of desires and passions. This also is a gross insincerity and it should not be difficult for you to detect it. Although this is a very common deception, more perhaps to deceive others than to deceive oneself. The mind catches hold of an idea, "all this is Brahman", "I am Brahman",—and you believe or pretend to believe that you have realised it and you can do nothing wrong. There are however subtler movements of insincerity or want of sincerity, even when you have not put on the divine cloak as the cover for your lapses. Even when you think you are sincere there may be movements which are not quite straight, behind which, if you probe unflinchingly, you will find lurking something undesirable. Look to the little movements, thoughts, sensations and impulses, that crowd the margin of your daily life; how many of them are solely turned to the Divine, how many of them are fired with an aspiration towards something higher? You should consider yourself fortunate if you find a few of the kind.

When I say that if you are sincere you are sure of victory, I mean that kind of sincerity, whole and undivided: the pure flame that burns like an offering, the intense joy of existing for the Divine alone where nothing else exists, nothing has any meaning or reason for existence but in the Divine. Nothing has value or interest if it is not this call, this aspiration, this opening to the supreme truth; all this that we call the Divine. You must serve the only reason for which the universe exists: take it away, all disappears.

THINGS SIGNIFICANT AND INSIGNIFICANT

All things are insignificant in ordinary life. The thoughts you think, the actions you do, the feelings you experience, all your movements have no significance at all, they possess no value. They belong to the superficial

part of your being, they come and pass away, like ripples on the sea, leaving no trace or effect in the depths. Only at a rare moment, if ever you come in contact with a corner of your soul, if something of that inmost consciousness touches or grazes any limb of yours, that flash of a moment is the only significant thing that happens in the midst of all the useless mass that is your life. This is the only precious point and the rest a world of rubbish. To make your life significant, to give it its true meaning and value, you must then draw back from the surface trivialities and look for something else behind. You must go very deep indeed if things are to cease being insignificant.

THE DIVINE FAMILY

When people, far separated from one another, belonging to different parts of the world or pursuing most diverse professions, meet and gather and work for a common purpose, it means that they are kindred souls and have met together and worked together before in other lives. They felt they belonged to the same family and resolved to act together and collaborate in a common endeavour for a common ideal. Indeed, the souls, in their psychic reality, are grouped in big families, as it were; they come down in groups again and again to take up and continue the work they are engaged in till it is complete.

At a given moment, when the time is ripe, they are called up. The souls are like children asleep, in the peace and repose of the psychic world, awaiting the urge or order for another birth. As soon as the order is given, they wake up and rush down towards the earth. When they drop thus into the earth's atmosphere, they are no longer together, they are scattered about all over the earth. One does not know even where one drops. Also once under the material conditions and circumstances here below, things take a very different aspect. For, the inner impulse, the original purpose gets veiled; the psychic forgets itself and is now surrounded and hedged in by forces, things and persons perhaps quite foreign and contradictory to its nature. Now comes the labour of the soul, to find itself, to look about for the lost end of the thread. The inner urge must be strong enough, the original will categorical enough for the being to surmount all obstacles, pass through all vicissitudes, work through all the windings of a labyrinthine journey and finally arrive. Some perhaps do not arrive at all in a particular life or arrive only to stop at a distance: others arrive not in a straight line, but, as I have said, after a tortuous and round-about wandering. In other words, in their

external mind and impulsion, they look for other things, they are interested in objects that are far other than the soul's interest—like the person who enquired of Yoga, as she thought a Yogi could give her back her spoilt beauty. And yet the soul makes use of such trivial or absurd means to turn the man towards itself, guide him gradually to the place or the family to which he really belongs.

The material world is full of things that draw you away from your soul's quest, from approaching your home. Normally you are tossed about by the forces of ignorant Nature and you are driven even to do the utmost stupidities. There is but one solution, to find your psychic being; and once you have found it, cling to it desperately and not to allow yourself to be drawn out by any temptation, any other impulsion whatsoever.

THE INNER AND THE OUTER

The external part of the being is turned to the Divine: you are conscious of your ideal and as much as possible you conform your behaviour to it. You appear what you want to be. But just behind the line, on the other side of your consciousness—in the subconscious, as it is called—the picture is different. The light has not touched there: the movements go the other way. Things—thoughts, impulses, feelings—hide which you would not like to own. Not that you consciously and deliberately hide them: but they are there as inevitable part and parcel of the original ordinary nature. They form the backyard of the consciousness; there are all kinds of nooks and corners, if not quite open spaces, which have accumulated darkness and dirt. This two-sidedness is common, in fact, universal; you have to be one-sided, that is, of one piece, wholly turned to the light. You must be conscious of these hidden elements and bring them out, expose them to the light calmly, candidly, fearlessly, so that the luminous force may act on them. They have to be drawn out and rejected, or if possible, to be purified and changed. Some are capable of change and become right movements; others are wholly wrong, they belong to the inferior consciousness and have to be cast away without pity.

THE SYMBOLIC IGNORANCE

How can there be dark spots in the light of the full consciousness (the

Mother's consciousness)? The darkness is only relative and depends upon the degree or status of consciousness. At the outset, on lower and narrower ranges, the light is dim and confined: it is surrounded by a much greater and denser area of darkness. As the consciousness grows, that is to say, manifests itself, as it rises and widens, the obscurity too recedes more and more and slowly fades away. This consciousness is not personal, but something impersonal. In other words, it holds within itself the universe including especially the earth. And earth is a dark object; it is made of ignorance and unconsciousness. The light envelops it and only gradually penetrates and transforms it. The Mother's consciousness is thus the representative consciousness; it represents all that is yet unconscious and striving secretly without knowing towards consciousness; it is also at the same time the light itself that acts and transforms. The divine consciousness embodied acting upon itself thus symbolises and embodies its action upon what would be viewed as others.

Logic is the worst enemy of Truth, as self-righteousness in the worst enemy of virtue; for the one cannot see its own errors nor the other its own imperfections.

SRI AUROBINDO

SONNETS

(Sri Aurobindo)

THE IRON DICTATORS

I LOOKED for Thee alone, but met my glance
The iron dreadful Four who rule our breath,
Masters of falsehood, Kings of ignorance,
High sovereign Lords of suffering and death.

Whence came these formidable autarchies,
From what inconscient blind Infinity,—
Cold propagandists of a million lies,
Dictators of a world of agony?

Or was it Thou who bor'st the fourfold mask?
Enveloping Thy timeless heart in Time,
Thou hast bound the spirit to its cosmic task,
To find Thee veiled in this tremendous mime.

Thou, only Thou, canst raise the invincible siege,
O Light, O deathless Joy, O rapturous Peace!

14-11-1938

THE CONSCIOUS INCONSCIENT

BECAUSE Thou hadst all eternity to amuse,
O dramatist of death and life and birth,
O sculptor of the living shapes of earth,
World-artist revelling in forms and hues,

A mathematician Mind that never errs,
Thou hast played with theorems, numbers, measures, cubes,
Passed cells, electrons, molecules through Thy tubes,
World-forces for thy Science's ministers,

And made a universe of Thy theories,
Craftsman minute, an architect of might.
Protean is thy Spirit of Delight,
An adept of a thousand mysteries.

Or built some deep Necessity, not Thy whim,
Fate and Inconscience and the snare of Time.

24-9-1939
28-9-1939

Often, in the slow[1] ages' long[2] retreat
On Life's thin ridge through Time's enormous sea,
I have accepted death and borne defeat
To gain some vantage by my fall for Thee.

For Thou hast given the Inconscient the dark right
To oppose the shining passage of my soul
And levy at each step the tax of Night:
Doom, her august accountant, keeps the roll.

All around me now the Titan forces press;
This world is theirs, they hold its[3] days in fee;
I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.
Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?

Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,
O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest.

25-9-1939

[1] long [2] slow [3] the

HYMN TO INDRA*

1. Indra, cleaver of the ocean, all words increased, most rapturous of the blissful, master of being and lord of stable strengths.

2. In thy friendship, who art stable and strong, we have no fear, O Indra, lord of the various light, towards thee we move forward the conqueror unconquered.

3. The first delights of Indra, his former expandings are not destroyed because, for his praisers he collects fullness of luminous strength.

4. He that breaketh the gate, the young, the seer, appeared immeasurable in force, Indra, that holdeth up all action, the thunderer wide-praised.

5. Thou wert the uncoverer of luminous Vala's lair, O dweller on the hill; into thee the gods without fear entered forcefully protected.[1]

6. Voiceful with thy ecstasies, O mighty one, I went towards the sea; the doers of action approached[2] in the knowledge of that delighter in my speech.

7. By thy containing mights thou camest down to the mighty and containing (Shushna); do thou in his revelation fulfilled in completeness lift up their inspirations.

8. Towards Indra who rules in his force our praises yearned, he who hath a thousand delights, ay, they are even more.

SRI AUROBINDO

* Rig Veda I. 11
Rishi: Jeta Madhucchandas
[1] Or, 'impelled'
[2] Or, 'resorted to me'

CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD*

CHAPTER ONE: SECTION I

1. Worship ye OM, the eternal syllable, OM is Udgitha, the chant of Samaveda; for with OM they begin the chant of Sama. And this is the exposition of OM.

2. Earth is the substantial essence of all these creatures and the waters are the essence of earth; herbs of the field are the essence of the waters, man is the essence of the herbs. Speech is the essence of man, Rigveda the essence of Speech, Sama the essence of Rik. Of Sama OM is the essence

3. This is the eighth essence of the essences and the really essential, the highest and it belongs to the upper hemisphere of things.

4. Which among things and which again is Rik; which among things and which again is Sama; which among things and which again is OM of the Udgitha—this is now pondered.

5. Speech is Rik, Breath is Sama; the Imperishable is OM of Udgitha. These are the divine lovers, Speech and Breath, Rik and Sama.

6. As a pair of lovers are these and they cling together in OM the eternal syllable; but now when the beloved and her lover meet, verily, they gratify each the desire of the other.

7. He becomes a gratifier of the desires of men who with this knowledge worships OM the eternal syllable.

8. Now this OM is the syllable of Assent; for to whatsoever one assents, one says OM; and assent is blessing of increase. Verily, he becomes a blesser and increaser of the desires of men who with this knowledge worships OM the eternal syllable.

9. By OM the triple knowledge proceeds; with OM the priest recites the Rik, with OM he pronounces the Yajur, with OM he chants the Sama. And all this is for the heaping up of the Imperishable and by the greatness of It and the Delightfulness.

* From old writings

10. He does works by OM who has the knowledge, and he also who ha it not; but these are diverse, the Knowledge and the Ignorance. Whatsoeve work one does with knowledge, with faith and with the secret of Veda, becomes to him more virile and mighty. This is the exposition of the Eterna letters.

CHAPTER ONE: SECTION 2

1. The Gods and the Demons strove together and both were children the Almighty Father. Then the Gods took up for weapon OM of Udgith for they said "With this we shall overcome these Titans."

2. The Gods worshipped OM as Breath in the nostrils; but the Demo came and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it smells both alike, th sweet scent and the evil odour. For it is smitten through and through wi evil.

3. Then the Gods worshipped OM as Speech; but the Demons came ar smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it speaks both alike, Truth ar Falsehood. For it is smitten through and through with Evil.

4. Then the Gods worshipped OM as the Eye; but the Demons car and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it beholds both alike, the fair see and the foul of favour. For it is smitten through and through with Evil

5. Then the Gods worshipped OM as the Ear; but the Demons came a smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it hears both alike, that which well to hear and that which is harsh and unseemly. For it is smitten throu and through with Evil.

6. Then the Gods worshipped Udgitha as Mind but the Demons car and smote it with the arrow of Evil; therefore it conceives both alike, rig thoughts and unlawful imaginations. For it is smitten through and throu with Evil.

7. Then the Gods worshipped OM as this which is Breath in the mou and the Demons rushing against it dashed themselves to pieces; as when object strikes against firm and solid rock, it dashes to pieces upon the ro

8. And even as an object hurling against firm and solid rock dashes its to pieces, so he hurls himself upon destruction whoso desires evil against t Knower or whoso does him hurt; for the Knower is as that firm and so rock.

9. With this Breath one cognises neither sweet scent nor ill odour, fo has flung Evil from it. Whatsoever one eats with this or drinks, thereby

cherishes the other breaths. At the end and last when he finds not the breath, he Spirit goes out from the body; verily he opens wide the mouth as he goes.

10. Angiras worshipped OM of Udgitha as Breath in the mouth and men hink of Breath in the mouth as Angiras because it is essence of the members f the body.

11. By the strength of Angiras, Brihaspati worshipped OM as Breath n the mouth, and men think of the Breath as Brihaspati, because Speech s the great goddess and Breath is the lord of Speech.

12. By the strength of Brihaspati, Ayasya worshipped OM as Breath n the mouth and men think of the Breath as Ayasya, because 'tis from the nouth it comes.

13. By the strength of Ayasya, Baka the son of Dalbha knew the Breath. And he became the Chanter of the Sama among the Naimishiyas and he hants their desires for them unto fulfilment.

14. Verily, he becomes a chanter unto fulfilment of the desires of men vho with this knowledge worships OM of Udgitha, the eternal syllable. Thus far concerning Self is the exposition.

SRI AUROBINDO

Only those thoughts are true the opposite of which is also true in its own time and application; indisputable dogmas are the most dangerous kind of falsehoods.

SRI AUROBINDO

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

(New series)

DISEASE is needlessly prolonged and ends in death oftener than inevitable, because the mind of the patient supports and dwells upo the disease of his body.

Medical Science has been more a curse to mankind than a blessing. has broken the force of epidemics and unveiled a marvellous surgery; bu also, it has weakened the natural health of man and multiplied individu diseases; it has implanted fear and dependence in the mind and body; has taught our health to repose not on natural soundness but a rickety a distasteful *witch* compact from the mineral and vegetable kingdoms.

The doctor aims a drug at a disease; sometimes it hits, sometimes miss The misses are left out of account, the hits treasured up, reckoned a systematised into a science.

We laugh at the savage for his faith in the medicine-man; but how are t civilised less superstitious who have faith in the doctors? The savage fir that when a certain incantation is repeated, he often recovers from a cert disease; he believes. The civilised patient finds that when he doses hims according to a certain prescription, he often recovers from a certain disea he believes. Where is the difference?

The north-country Indian herdsman, attacked by fever, sits in the c stream of a river for an hour or more and rises up free and healthy. If educated man did the same, he would perish, not because the same remed its nature kills one and cures another, but because our bodies have b fatally indoctrinated by the mind into false habits.

It is not the medicine that cures so much as the patient's faith in the doc and the medicine. Both are a clumsy substitute for the natural faith in o own self-power which they have themselves destroyed.

The healthiest ages of mankind were those in which there were the fewest material remedies.

The most robust and healthy race left on earth were the African savages; but how long can they so remain after their physical consciousness has been contaminated by the mental aberrations of the civilised?

We ought to use the divine health in us to cure and prevent diseases; but Galen and Hippocrates and their tribe have given us instead an armoury of drugs and a barbarous Latin hocuspocus as our physical gospel.

Medical Science is well-meaning and its practitioners often benevolent and not seldom self-sacrificing; but when did the well-meaning of the ignorant save them from harm-doing?

If all remedies were really and in themselves efficacious and all medical theories sound, how would that console us for our lost natural health and vitality? The upas-tree is sound in all its parts, but it is still an upas-tree.

The spirit within us is the only all-efficient doctor and submission of the body to it the one true panacea.

God within is infinite and self-fulfilling Will. Unaffected by the fear of death canst thou leave to Him, not as an experiment (but), with a calm and entire faith thy ailments? Thou shalt find in the end He exceeds the skill of a million doctors.

Health protected by twenty-thousand precautions is the gospel of the doctors; but it is not God's evangel for the body, nor Nature's.

Man was once naturally healthy and could revert to that primal condition if he were suffered; but Medical Science pursues our body with an innumerable pack of drugs and assails the imagination with ravening hordes of microbes.

I would rather die and have done with it than spend life in defending myself against a phantasmal siege of microbes. If that is to be barbarous, unenlightened, I embrace gladly my Cimmreian darkness.

Surgeons save and cure by cutting and maiming. Why not rather seek to discover Nature's direct all-powerful remedies?

It should take long for self-cure to replace medicine, because of the fear, self-distrust and unnatural physical reliance on drugs which Medical Science has taught to our minds and bodies and made our second nature.

Medicine is necessary for our bodies in disease only because our bodies have learned the art of not getting well without medicines. Even so, one sees often that the moment Nature chooses for recovery is that in which the life is abandoned as hopeless by the doctors.

Distrust of the curative power within us was our physical fall from Paradise. Medical Science and a bad heredity are the two angels of God who stand at the gates to forbid our return and re-entry.

Medical Science to the human body is like a great Power which enfeebles a smaller State by its protection or like a benevolent robber who knocks his victim flat and riddles him with wounds in order that he may devote his life to healing and serving the shattered body.

Drugs cure the body when they do not merely trouble or poison it, but only if their physical attack on the disease is supported by the force of the spirit; if that force can be made to work freely, drugs are become superfluous.

SRI AUROBINDO

KALIDASA

THE ROLE OF THE APSARAS

THERE is nothing more charming, more attractive in Kalidasa than his instinct for sweet and human beauty; everything he touches becomes the inhabitant of a moonlit world of romance and yet—there is the unique gift, the consummate poetry—remains perfectly natural, perfectly near to us, perfectly human. Shelley's *Witch of Atlas* and Keats' *Cynthia* are certainly lovely creations, but they do not live; misty, shimmering, uncertain, seen in some half-dream where the moon is full and strange indefinable shapes begin to come out from the skirts of the forest; they charm our imagination, but our hearts take no interest in them. They are the creations of the mystic Celtic imagination with its singular intangibility, its fascinating other-worldliness. The Hindu has been always decried as a dreamer and mystic. There is truth in the charge but also a singular inaccuracy. The Hindu mind, in one sense, is the most concrete in the world. It seeks after abstraction, yet is it never satisfied so long as it remains abstraction. To make the objects and concepts of this world concrete, that is comparatively easy; sun and rain or air are, at their most ethereal, the sublimated *secrets* of matter. The Hindu is not contented till he has seized things behind the sunlight also as concrete realities. He is passionate for the infinite, the unseen, the spiritual, but he will not rest satisfied with conceiving them, he insists on mapping the infinite, on seeing the unseen, on visualising the spiritual. The Celt throws his imagination into the infinite and is rewarded with beautiful phantoms, out of which he evolves a pale, mystic and intangible poetry. The Hindu sends his heart and his intellect and eventually his whole being after his imagination and for his reward he has seen God and interpreted existence. It is this double aspect of Hindu temperament which is the secret of our civilisation, our religion, our life and literature; extreme spirituality successfully attempting to work in harmony with extreme materialism. On the one side we spiritualise the material out of all but a phenomenal and illusory existence, on the other we materialise the spiritual in the most definite and

realistic forms; this is the secret of the high philosophic idealism which to the less capable European seems so impossible an atmosphere and of the prolific idolatry which to the dogmatic and formalising Christian seems so gross. In any other race-temperament this mental division would have split into two broadly disparate or opposing types and attempts at compromise comprising action and reaction would have built up the history of thought. In the myriad-minded and undogmatic Hindu it worked not mental division, but as the first discord which prepares for a consistent harmony; the best and most characteristic Hindu thought regards either tendency as essential to the perfect and subtle comprehension of existence; they are considered the positive and negative sides of one truth, and must both be grasped if we are not to rest in a half light. Hence the entire tolerance of the Hindu religion to all intellectual attitudes except sheer libertinism; hence also the marvellous perfection of grades in thought-attitudes which the Hindu mind travels between the sheer negative and the sheer positive and yet sees in them only a ladder of progressive and closely related steps rising through relative conceptions to one final and absolute knowledge.

The intellectual temperament of a people determines the main character-stamp of its poetry. There is therefore no considerable poet in Sanskrit who has not the twofold impression (spiritual and romantic in aim, our poetry is realistic in method), who does not keep his feet on the ground even while his eyes are with the clouds. The soaring lark who loses himself in light, the ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void are not denizens of the Hindu plane of temperament. Hence the expectant critic will search ancient Hindu literature in vain for the poetry of mysticism; that is only to be found in recent Bengali poetry which has felt the influence of English models. The old Sanskrit poetry was never satisfied unless it could show colour, energy and definiteness, and these are things imcompatible with true mysticism. Even the Upanishads which declare the phenomenal world to be unreal, yet have a rigidly practical aim and labour in every line to make the indefinite definite and the abstract concrete. But of all our great poets Kalidasa best exemplifies this twynatured Hindu temperament under the conditions of supreme artistic beauty and harmony. Being the most variously learned of Hindu poets he draws into his net all our traditions, ideas, myths, imaginations, allegories, the grotesque and the trivial as well as the sublime and the lovely, but touching them with the magic wand teaches them to live together in the harmonising atmosphere of his poetic temperament. Under his slight touch the grotesque becomes strange, wild and romantic, the trivial

refines into a dainty and gracious slightness, the sublime yields to the law of romance, acquires a mighty grace, a strong sweetness; and what was merely lovely attains power, energy and brilliant colour. His creations in fact live in a peculiar light, which is not the light that never was on sea or land but rather our ordinary sunshine recognisable though strangely and beautifully altered. The alteration is not real; rather our vision is affected by the recognition of something the sunbeams concealed and yet the cause of the sunbeams; but it is human sunlight we see always. May we not say it is that luminousness behind the veil of this sunlight which is the heaven of Hindu imagination and in all Hindu work shines through it without overpowering it? Hindu poetry is the only Paradise in which the lion can lie down with the lamb.

The personages of Kalidasa's poetry are with but few exceptions gods and demigods or skiey spirits, but while they preserve a charm of wonder, sublimity or weirdness, they are brought on to our own plane of experience, their speech and thought and passion is human. This was the reason alleged by the late Bankim Chandra Chatterji, himself a poet and a critic of fine and strong insight, for preferring the *Birth of the War-God* to *Paradise Lost;* he thought that both epics were indeed literary epics of the same type, largely planned and sublime in subject, diction and thought, but that the Hindu poem, if less grandiose in its pitch, had in a high degree the humanism and sweetness of simple and usual feeling in which the *Paradise Lost* is more often than not deficient. But the humanism of which I speak is not the Homeric naturalism; there is little of the sublime or romantic in the essence of the Homeric gods though there is much of both in a good many of their accidents and surroundings. But Kalidasa's divine and semidivine personages lose none of their godhead by living on the plane of humanity. Perhaps the most exquisite masterpiece in this kind is the *Cloud Messenger.* The actors in that beautiful love-elegy might have been chosen by Shelley himself; they are two lovers of Faeryland—a cloud, rivers, mountains, the gods and demigods of air, hill and sky. The goal of the cloud's journey is the ethereal city of Alaka crowned by the clouds upon the golden hill and bathed at night in the unearthly moonlight that streams from the brow of Shiva, the mystic's God. The earth is seen mainly as a wonderful panorama by one travelling on the wings of a cloud. Here are all the materials for one of those intangible harmonies of woven and luminous mist with which Shelley allures and baffles us. The personages and scenery are those of *Queen Mab,* of *Prometheus Unbound* and the *Witch of Atlas.* But Kalidasa's city in the mists is no evanescent city of sunlit clouds; it is his own beautiful

and luxurious Ujjayini idealised and exempted from mortal afflictions; like a true Hindu he insists on translating the ideal into the terms of the familiar, sensuous and earthy.

> For death and birth keep not their mystic round
> In Ullaca[1], there from the deathless trees
> The blossom lapses never to the ground
> But lives for ever garrulous with bees
> All honey-drunk—nor yet its sweets resign
> For ever in their girdling companies...

And when he comes to describe the sole mourner in that town of delight and eternal passion unsated, this is how he describes her, how human, how touching, how common it all is! While we read, we feel ourselves kin to and one with a more beautiful world than our own. These creatures of fancy hardly seem to be an imaginary race but rather ourselves removed from the sordidness and the coarse pains of our world, into a more gracious existence. This, I think, is the essential attraction which makes his countrymen to this day feel such a passionate delight in Kalidasa; after reading a poem of his the world and life and our fellow creatures human, animal or inanimate have become suddenly more beautiful and dear to us than they were before; the heart flows out towards birds and beasts and the very trees seem to be drawing us towards them with their branches as if with arms; the vain cloud and the senseless mountain are no longer senseless or empty,but friendly intelligences that have a voice to our souls. Our own common thoughts, feelings, and passions have also become suddenly fair to us, they have received the sanction of beauty. And then through the passion of delight and the sense of life and of love in all beautiful objects we reach to the Mighty Spirit behind them whom our soul recognizes no longer as an object of knowledge or of worship but as her lover to whom she must fly, leaving her husband, the material life and braving the jeers and reprobation of the world for His sake. Thus by a singular paradox, one of those beautiful oxymorons of which the Hindu temperament is full, we reach God through the senses, just as our ancestors did through the intellect and through the emotions; for in the Hindu mind all roads lead eventually to the Rome of its longing, the dwelling of the Most High God. One can see how powerfully Kalidasa's poetry must have

[1] Alaka

prepared the national mind for the religion of the Puranas, for the worship of Kali, Our Mother and of Sri Krishna, of Vrindavan, our soul's Paramour. Here indeed lies his chief claim to rank with Valmiki and Vyasa as one of our three national poets, in that he gathered the mind-life of the nation into his poetry at a great and critical moment and helped forward into the groove down which it must henceforth run.

This method is applied with conspicuous beauty and success in the Urvasie. The Apsaras are the most beautiful and romantic conception on the lesser plane of Hindu mythology. From the moment that they arose out of the waters of the milky Ocean, robed in ethereal raiment and heavenly adornment, waking melody from a million lyres, the beauty and light of them has transformed the world. They crowd in the sunbeams, they flash and gleam over heaven in the lightnings, they make the azure beauty of the sky; they are the light of sunrise and sunset and the haunting voices of forest and field. They dwell too in the life of the soul; for they are the ideal pursued by the poet through his lines, by the artist shaping his soul canvas, by the sculptor seeking a form in the marble; for the joy of their embrace the hero flings his life into the rushing torrent of battle; the sage, musing upon God, sees the shining of their limbs and falls from his white ideal. The delight of life, the beauty of things, the attraction of sensuous beauty, this is what the mystic and romantic side of the Hindu temperament strove to express in the Apsara. The original meaning is everywhere felt as a shining background, but most in the older allegories, especially the strange and romantic legend of Pururavas as we first have it in the Brahmanas and the Vishnupurana.

But then came in the materialistic side of the Hindu mind and desired some familiar term, the earthlier the better, in which to phrase its romantic conception, this was found in the Hetaira. The class of Hetaira was as recognised an element in the Hindu society as in the Greek, but it does not appear to have exercised quite so large an influence in social life. As in the Greek counterpart they were a specially learned and accomplished class of women, but their superiority over ladies of good families was not so pronounced; for in ancient India previous to the Mahomedan episode respectable women were not mere ignorant housewives like the Athenian ladies, but often they were educated though not in a formal manner; that is to say, they went through no systematic training such as men had, but parents were always expected to impart general culture and accomplishments to them by private tution at home; singing, music, dancing and to some extent painting were the ordinary accomplishments. General knowledge of morality and

Scripture and tradition was imperative and sometimes the girls of highborn, wealthy or learned families received special instruction in philosophy or mathematics. Some indeed seem to have pursued a life of philosophic learning either as virgins or widows; but such instances were in pre-Buddhistic times very rare. The normal Hindu feeling has always been that the sphere of woman is in the home and her life incomplete unless merged in her husband's. In any case, the majority of the *kulavadhus*, women of respectable families, could hardly be more than amateurs in the arts and sciences, whereas with the Hetaira (Ganikas) such accomplishments were pursued and mastered as a profession. Hence beside their ordinary occupation of singing and dancing in the temples and on great public occasions such as coronations and holy days, they often commanded the irregular affections of highborn or wealthy men who led openly a double life at home with the wife, outside with the Hetaira. As a class, they held no mean place in society; for they must not be confused with the strolling actor or mountebank caste who were a proverb for their vileness of morals. Many of them, no doubt, as will inevitably happen when the restraints of society are not recognized, led loose, immoral and sensual lives; in such a class Lais and Phryne must be as common as Aspasia. Nevertheless the higher and intellectual element seems to have prevailed; those who arrogated freedom in their sexual relations but were not prostitutes are admirably portrayed in Vasantasena of the Toy Cart, a beautiful melodrama drawn straight from the life; like her they often exchanged, with the consent of their lover's family, the unveiled face of the Hetaira for the seclusion of the wife. This class both in its higher and lower type lasted late into the present century, both are now under the auspices of Western civilisation almost entirely replaced by a growing class of professional prostitutes, an inevitable consummation which it seems hardly worth while to dub social reform and accelarate by an active crusade.

The Apsaras then are the divine Hetaira of Paradise, beautiful singers and actresses whose beauty and art relieve the arduous and world-long struggle of the Gods against the forces that tend towards disruption by the Titans who would restore Matter to its original atomic condition or of dissolution by the sages and hermits who would make phenomena dissolve prematurely into the One who is above Phenomena. They rose from the Ocean, says Valmiki, seeking who should choose them as brides, but neither the Gods nor the Titans accepted them, therefore are they said to be common or universal.

We shall now understand why the Apsara is represented as the Hetaira

of heaven. They represent all that is sensuous, attractive or voluptuous in the Universe, the element of desire which, being unspiritual and non-moral, finds its sphere in the satisfaction of the sense of beauty and for that satisfaction needs freedom.

We see then the appropriateness of the Hetaira as a material form into which the vague idea of sensuous beauty in the world might run. For the charm of the Apsara even when working on the plane of the mind, is still vital and sensational; it does not belong to the more rarified regions of the spirit. Now vital and sensational charm in seeking its fulfilment demands that the pursuit of sensuous beauty shall be its sole object, that it shall be without check as without any side-glance or after-thought; it does not seek to be immoral, but simply rejects all moral tests; it recognizes no law but the fulfilment of its own being. This is the very spirit of the Hetaira. The beauty of nakedness sculptured, painted or shaped into words, is not immoral. For the moment we apply the test of morality, it becomes clear that we must either rule it out as not belonging to the world of morality or rule out morality itself for the moment as not belonging to the world of beauty, which is essentially a world of nakedness, in the sense that dress there is an occasional ornament, not a necessary covering; not because there is any essential opposition between them, but because there is no essential connection or necessary point of contact. Ideals of all the plastic and sensuous arts fall within the scope of the Apsara; she is actress, songstress, musician, painter. When they arose from the waves neither the gods nor the demons accepted them as wives; accepted by none they became common to all; for neither the great active faculties of man nor the great destructive recognize sensuous delight and charm as their constant and sufficient mistress, but rather as the joy and refreshment of an hour, an accompaniment or diversion in their constant pursuit of the recognized ideal to which they are wedded. Moreover sensuous beauty has a certain attraction and splendour which seem to some minds finally, and occasionally to most, fairer and brighter than that other ideal which by daily occupation with it, by permissibility and by sameness, grows stale for some, fades into homeliness and routine for others and preserves its real, undying, unageing and unforsakeable freshness and delight only to the few constant and unswerving souls, who are the elect of our human evolution. In all this the idea of the Apsara coincides with the actuality of the Hetaira. In choosing the Hetaira therefore for the Apsara's earthly similitude, the Hindu mind showed once more that wonderful mythopoeic penetrativeness which is as

unerring and admirable in its way as the Greek mythopoeic felicity and tact.

When Narayana, the primeval and dateless sage of old entered upon austerities in the most secret and desolate recesses of the Snowy Mountains, Indra, prince of the air, always hostile to asceticism, always distrustful of the philosophic and contemplative spirit, was alarmed for the balance of the world and the security of his own rule. He therefore sent the Apsaras to disturb the meditations of Narayana. Then upon the desolate Himalaya Spring set the beauty of his feet; the warm south wind breathed upon those inclement heights, blossoming trees grew in the eternal snow and the voice of the cuckoo was heard upon the mountain tops. It was amidst these vernal sweetnesses that the Apsaras came to Narayana; they were the loveliest of all the sisterhood, and subtlest and most alluring of feminine arts and enchantments was the way of their wooing; but Narayana who is Vishnu the World Saviour when he comes in the guise of the ascetic, moved neither by the passion of love nor by the passion of anger, smiled in the large and indulgent mood of his world-embracing nature and opening his thigh took from it a radiant and marvellous creature, of whose beauty the loveliest Apsaras seemed but pale and broken reflections. Ashamed they veiled their faces and stole silently away from the snowy hermitage. But Narayana called this daughter of his creation Urvasie (she who lies in the thigh of the Supreme, the thigh being the seat of sensuousness) and gave her to Indra to be his most potent defence against the austerities of spiritual longing.

And yet the work of the philosophic mind incidentally serves sensuous and material life by increasing its resources and the depth of its charm. For the power of the philosophic ideals which have profoundly affected humanity are not limited to the domain of the intellect but also affect, enlarge and strengthen man's aesthetic outlook upon the world. The sensuous world becomes fuller of beauty, richer in colours, shades and suggestions, more profound and attractive with each widening of the human ideal. It is Urvasie who sprang from the thigh of the withered hermit cold and not any of those original daughters of the inconstant waves who is the loveliest and most dangerous of the Apsaras.

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In dramatic tone and build therefore this is an admirable creation, but there is so far no hint of the worldwide divineness of Urvasie, of the goddess within the woman. In direct allegory Kalidasa was too skilful an arrist to

deal, but we expect the larger conception of this beautiful and significant figure to enter into or at least colour the dramatic conception of the woman; some pomp of words, some greatness of gesture, some large divinity whether of speech or look to raise her above a mere nymph, however charming, into the goddess we know. Yet in rigidly excluding the grandiose or the coloured Kalidasa has shown, I think, his usual unerring dramatic and psychological tact. Dramatically, to have made both Pururavas and Urvasie equally dramatic in spirit and diction, to have clothed both in the external purple of poetry would have been to offend the eye with unrelieved gorgeousness and converted the play from an interesting and skilfully woven drama into a confused splendour of lyrical dialogue. Psychologically, the divinity and universal charm of Urvasie would have been defaced rather than brought out by investing her with grandeur of feeling or a pomp of poetic ornament. Perfect beauty has in it a double aspect, its intrinsic self and the impression it makes on the vivid and receptive mind. In itself it is simple, unconscious and unadorned, most effective when it is most naked; ceasing to be these, it loses its perfection and a great part of its universal charm. The nude human figure in painting and sculpture, unadorned magic or strength of style and conception in poetry, clear, luminous and comprehensive thought in philosophy, these are what the pursuing human spirit feels to be ideal, highest, most worthy of itself. Drapery blurs the effulgence of the goddess, ornament distracts the spirit and disappoints it of its engrossed and undisturbed sense of possession. On the other hand the mind while most moved by what is simple and natural in its appeal, is romantic in its method of receiving the impression; becoming engrossed and steeped with the idea of it, it directs to it and surrounds it with all the fresh impressions that continually flow in on the consciousness, gathers from it colour, fire and passion, creates around it a host of splendid associations and clothes it in the pomp of its own passionate imagery. The first period of a literary race when its mind is yet virgin and has to create beauty, is invariably simple and classical, the last period when its mind is saturated and full of past beauty is always romantic and aesthetic. The relations of Urvasie and Pururavas are true to this psychological principle. She herself is mere beauty and charm sufficient to itself and commanding delight and worship because she is herself, not because of any graces of expression, imagination, intellectual profundity. But the mind of Pururavas receiving her pure and perfect image steeps her in its own fire and colour, surrounding her with a halo of pomp and glory which reveals himself while seeking to interpret her.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE SOURCES OF POETRY*

THE swiftness of the muse has been embodied in the image of Pegasus the heavenly horse of Greek legend; it was from the rapid beat of his hoofs on the rock that Hippocrene flowed. The waters of Poetry flow in a current or a torrent; where there is a pause or a denial, it is a sign of obstruction in the stream or of imperfection in the mind which the waters have chosen for their bed and continent. In India we have the same idea. Saraswati is for us the goddess of poetry, and her name means the stream or "she who has flowing motion". But even Saraswati is only an intermediary. Ganga is the real mother of inspiration, she who flows impetuously down from the head of Mahadev, God high-seated, over the Himalaya on the mind to the homes and cities of men. All poetry is an inspiration, something breathed into the thinking organ from above; it is recorded in the mind, but is born in the higher principle of direct knowledge or ideal vision which surpasses mind. It is in reality a revelation. The prophetic or revealing power sees the substance; the inspiration perceives the right expression. Neither is manufactured; nor is poetry really a poiesis or composition, nor even a creation, but rather the revelation of something that eternally exists. The ancients knew this truth and used the same word for poet and prophet, creator and seer, *sophos*, *vates*, *kavi*.

But there are differences in the manifestation. The greatest motion of poetry comes when the mind is still and the ideal principle works above and outside the brain, above even the hundred-petalled lotus of the ideal mind, in its proper empire, for then it is Veda that is revealed, the perfect substance and expression of eternal truth. The higher ideation transcends genius just as genius transcends ordinary intellect and perception. But that great faculty is still beyond the normal level of our evolution. Usually we see the action of the revelation and inspiration reproduced by a secondary diluted and uncertain process in the mind. But even this secondary and

* From old writings

inferior action is so great that it can give us Shakespeare, Homer and Valmeki. There is also a tertiary and yet more common action of the inspiration. For of our three mental instruments of knowledge,—the heart or emotionally realising mind, the observing and reasoning intellect with its aids, fancy and memory, and the intuitive intellect,—it is into the last and highest that the ideal principle transmits its inspirations when the greatest poetry writes itself out through the medium of the poet. But if the intuitive intellect is not strong enough to act habitually, it is better for the poetry to descend into the heart and return to the intellect suffused and coloured with passion and emotion than to be formed directly in the observing intellect.

Poetry written from the reasoning intellect is apt to be full of ingenious conceits, logic, argumentation, rhetorical turns, ornamental fancies, echoes learned and imitative rather than uplifted and transformed. This is what is sometimes called classical poetry, the vigorous and excellent but unemotional and unuplifted poetry of Pope and Dryden. It has its inspiration, its truth and value; it is admirable in its way, but it is only great when it is lifted out of itself into intuitive writing or else invaded by the heart. For everything that needs fire rather than light, driving-force rather than clearness, enthusiasm rather than correctness, the heart is obviously the more potent instrument. Now, poetry to be great must have either enthusiasm or ecstasy.

Yet the poetry that rises up from the heart is usually a turbid stream; our own restless ideas and imaginations mix with the pure inrush from above, and turbulent uprush from below, our excited emotions seek an exaggerated expression, our aesthetic habits and predilections busy themselves to demand a satisfaction greatly beyond their due. Such poetry may be inspired, but it is not always suitable or inevitable. There is often a double inspiration, the higher or ecstatic and the lower or emotional, and the lower disturbs and drags down the higher. This is the birth of romantic or excessively exuberant poetry, too rich in expression, too abundant and redundant in substance. The best poetry coming straight from the right centres may be bare and strong, unadorned and lofty, or it may be rich and splendid; it may be at will romantic or classical; but it will always be felt to be the right thing for its purpose; it is always nobly or rapturously inevitable.

But even in the higher centres of the intuitive intellect there may be defects in the inspiration. There is a kind of false fluency which misses the true language of poetry from dullness of perception. Under the

impression that it is true and inspired writing it flows with an imperturbable flatness, saying the thing that should be said but not in the way that it should be said, without force and felicity. This is the tamasic or clouded stimulus, active, but full of unenlightenment and self-ignorance. The thing seen is right and good; accompanied with the inspired expression it would make very noble poetry. Instead, it becomes prose rendered unnatural and difficult to tolerate by being cut up into lengths. Wordsworth is the most characteristic and interesting victim of tamasic stimulus. Other great poets fall a prey to it, but that superb and imperturbable self-satisfaction under the infliction is his alone. There is another species of tamasic stimulus which transmits an inspired and faultless expression, but the substance is neither interesting to man nor pleasing to the gods. A good deal of Milton comes under this category. In both cases what has happened is that either the inspiration or the revelation has been active, but its companion activity has refused to associate itself in the work.

It is when the mind works at the form and substance of poetry without either the revelation or the inspiration from above that respectable or minor poetry is produced. Judgment, memory and imagination may work, command of language may be there, but without that secondary action of a higher than intellectual force, it is labour wasted, work that earns respect but not immortality. Doggerel and bastard poetry take their rise not even in the observing intellect but from the sensational mind or the passive memory guided only by the mere physical pleasure of sound and emotion. It is bold, blatant, external, imitative, vulgar; its range of intellectuality and imaginativeness cannot go beyond the vital impluse and the vital delight. But even in the sensational mind there is the possibility of a remote action from the ideal self; for even to the animals who think sensationally only God has given revelations and inspirations which we call instincts. Under such circumstances even bastard poetry may have a kind of worth, a kind of inevitability. The poet in the sensational man may be entirely satisfied and delighted, and even in the more developed human being the sensational element may find a poetical satisfaction not of the highest. The best ballad poetry and Macaulay's lays are instances in point. Scott is a sort of link between sensational and intellectual poetry. While there are men mainly sensational, secondarily intellectual and not at all ideal, he will always be admired.

Another kind of false inspiration is the rajasic or fiery stimulus. It is not flat and unprofitable like the tamasic, but hasty, impatient and vain. It is

eager to avoid labour by catching at the second best expression or the incomplete vision of the idea, insufficiently jealous to secure the best form, the most satisfying substance. Rajasic poets, even when they feel the defect in what they have written, hesitate to sacrifice it because they also feel and are attached either to what in it is valuable or to the memory of their delight when it was first written. If they get a better expression or a fuller sight, they often prefer to reiterate rather than strike out inferior stuff with which they are in love. Sometimes, drifting or struggling helplessly along that shallow and vehement current, they vary one idea or harp on the same imagination without any final success in expressing it inevitably. Examples of the rajasic stimulus are commonest in Shelley and Spenser, but few English poets are free from it. This is the rajasic fault in expression. But the fiery stimulus also perverts or hampers the substance. An absence of self-restraint, an unwillingness to restrict and limit the ideas and imaginations is a sure sign of a rajasic ideality. There is an attempt to exhaust all the possibilities of the subject, to expand and multiply thoughts and imaginative visions beyond the bounds of the right and permissible. Or else the true idea is rejected or fatally anticipated by another which is or seems to be more catching and boldly effective. Keats is the principal exemplar of the first tendency, the Elizabethans of the second. The earlier work of Shakespeare abounds with classical instances. As distinguished from the Greek, English is pronouncedly rajasic literature and, though there is much in it that is more splendid than almost anything done by the Greeks,—more splendid, not better,—a great deal even of its admired portions are rather rich or meretricious than great and true.

The perfect inspiration in the intuitive intellect is the sattwic or luminous inspiration, which is disinterested, self-contained, yet at will noble, rich or vigorous, having its eye only on the right thing to be said and the right way to say it. It does not allow its perfection to be interfered with by emotion or eagerness but this does not shut it out from ecstasy and exaltation. On the contrary, its delight of self-enjoyment is a purer and more exquisite enthusiasm than that which attends any other inspiration. It commands and uses emotion without enslaving itself to it. There is indeed a sattwic stimulus which is attached to its own luminosity, limpidity and steadiness, and avoids richness, force or emotion of a poignant character even when these are needed and appropriate. The poetry of Matthew Arnold is often though not always of this character. But this is a limited inspiration. Sattwic as well as rajasic poetry may be written from the uninspired

intellect, but the sensational mind never gives birth to sattwic poetry.

One thing has to be added. A poet need not be a reflective critic; he need not have the reasoning and analysing intellect and dissect his own poetry. But two things he must have in some measure to be perfect, the intuitive judgment which shows him at a glance whether he has got the best or the second-best idea, the perfect or the imperfect expression and rhythm, and the intuitive reason which shows him without analysis why or wherein it is best or second-best, perfect or imperfect. These four faculties, revelation or prophecy, inspiration, intuitive judgment and intuitive reason, are the perfect equipment of genius doing the works of interpretative and creative knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

When, O eager disputant, thou hast prevailed in a debate, then art thou greatly to be pitied, for thou hast lost a chance of widening knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

SENSE AND PERCEPTION

I

SCIENCE seeks to know by a systematic inquiry; and from its probings into the nature and relation of things, it strives to bring its discoveries into a practical and utilisable form that can be applied to all our outer activities. Thus science has essentially a practical aim,—to bring knowledge, which is at present beyond our sense-awareness, into a working relation with things around; and in this way scientific principles are made usable. In fact the utility of science's findings has increasingly become the major concern of its exponents. It is clear however that our use of science has grown out of all proportion to the real knowledge we have of the underlying processes and their origin. We have objectivised the knowledge before it has been properly subjectivised and become a possession of our inner consciousness. We are not therefore master of this knowledge, although we can use it,—which even an automaton can be built to do. True mastery implies not only a facile and accurate handling, but the possession of the consciousness behind the action. Science, in pursuit of a rapid, though by no means perfect handling of knowledge, has obsviously neglected or by-passed this all-important aspect.

Within the present framework of science we find what seems to be an accepted and fundamental fact; namely, that all physical phenomena ultimately reduce themselves to an Energy, either in the form of waves or of organised particles. On the one hand there is the environing field, and on the other the nuclear, persistent, dynamic centres contained in it, (whether these belong to the particles of atoms or the planetary systems of the universe). Although this is demonstrably a real picture of the nature of the world, yet it nevertheless represents but a partial—the material—aspect of it. Even further investigation by science on these lines has but simplified the field, revealing an ultimate monism of substance based on the common electrical

* *The Life Divine* Vol. II. Chap. I pp 5-9 (2nd Edition.)

energy of electrons, protons, and their associate particles. But this is a monism that does not yet explain differences; for science has not yet been able to formulate the fundamental difference between the material energy and that which life displays. Evolution shows that from simple elemental particles complex molecules are constantly being built up; and out of these latter organic matter has come into being as the basis of living substance. In this way life, with a different mode of working from the material combination and disintegration of substance, has been able to remould the very nature of matter, by what appears to be a rapid and continuous cycle of building up and breaking down . This we see in the familiar process of growth, reproduction and decay. Yet science, explaining these phenomena exclusively by the laws of matter, naturally fails to take into account the fact that the life-energy is essentially creative. In fact the action of life has been found to be quite opposed, or rather compensatory, to that of the material energy —as the simple demonstrable experiment of the nerve impulse shows, (where this latter is an "all-or-nothing" impulse working by non-material laws quite distinct from the familiar harmonic energy wave pattern of the material type). For this reason the physical and chemical processes explain only part of the functioning and behaviour of living organisms. The seed, which grows into the tree, already contains within it the inherent factors that are to bring forth the mature plant. We might say that the future course of any given seed is already broadly determined in its embryo; so that we cannot place the onus of character formation wholly on the environment, although this latter may be instrumental in accentuating or suppressing latent, pre-existent characters. Obviously by merely exposing the existence of genes and chromosomes, or demonstrating the action of environment, science does not explain the subtle psychological characters that these elemental units embody or enfold. For how can these mere forms be themselves that freedom which evolves characters unique for each individual, or which determines species characteristic of the type, class or genera, all that the seed holds in itself from the very beginning? It is obvious that the multiple formative activity of the life-energy —and less so the elusive phenomenon of mind —cannot be explained solely in terms of material laws and environment, as science until recently has been endeavouring to do.

While it is apparent that infinite differentiation is a basic process of Nature (and because of this fact man is impelled to systematise his knowledge), we are also forced to see that this condition could not exist unless it were subject to a higher Law that relates all differences to a greater and wider harmony

For all is ultimately cosmos, and not a haphazard and chaotic cross-pattern as it may superficially seem. Probing below the surface, we find that there is an underlying order and pattern in Nature, even though one can as yet discern only fleeting glimpses of the Whole of it. It is only when we consider more specifically the rhythm of life, apart from the material phenomena as the predominant factor, that we begin to discern a purpose, a directive drive, in Nature's working, which (disconcertingly to our logic) seems to operate through blind impulses or by a wasteful, laborious and circuitous out-branching. It is clear also to man's intelligence, that his own advent into the terrestrial evolution had brought something new—the mind-principle—in a living and material form. What we experience in our own perception gives us but a cross-section of this complex relation, where the interplay of mind is canalised and relayed through the material substance of the body, by means of the intermediary action of the life-energy in the form of nervous impulses. This forms the reticulated pattern of our own experience and contact with the world; the consideration of which brings us directly to the root of man's outer awareness,—grounded on the sense-mind and the organs of sense which have evolved from the lower levels of Nature. These channels, in fact, have been the natural means in man's progressive advancement, by which he has been able to grow out of the animal stage, and orient himself to the outer world; for through a refinement and discriminative use of sense he has enriched his knowledge and experience of the world. Also it is the sense-mind, we must note, that has introduced him to the wider recognition of the infinite differences of things. Thus by scientific endeavour he has classified and recorded his observations and knowledge; while through artistic and aesthetic experience he has explored the wider fields of colour, sound, harmony and image-pattern, —all of which have brought him a far more varied and wider store of knowledge extending beyond his ordinary sense perception.

In this connection we might look a little more closely into the action of the sense-mind, on which man's knowledge is built, and from which he must obviously widen and grow if he is to develop new and more subtle faculties that can bring into his activities wider ranges of consciousness. For it is clear that the present limited faculties of sense and consciousness by no means represent the final condition of man. The fundamental fact is that the world we perceive is essentially mind's picture of Reality,—or at least the individual mind's sector of it. But this does not mean that our world-picture is merely an individual creation,—each one composing a private world of his own. There is more in mental perception than the individual's use of mind-

energy, and more than a mere pattern-weaving as its sole function. We have to take into account the present status and limitation of Mind itself, and its influence on the material world. An occult knowledge has revealed that Mind is a cosmic entity or principle, which from its own self-existent plane had entered into the evolutionary process, (as Life also had done), and had introduced therein successively wider and freer ranges of consciousness; a process, of course, which is not yet complete. In this way a progressive working relation between the material substance, the life-energy and the power of mind was established in the earth-nature.

But, as Sri Aurobindo has pointedly shown, we have to take into account the fact that cosmic Mind is itself a subordinate power,—more precisely the instrument of Supermind,the divine creative Power, from which it became separated. Thus through the original entry of Mind into the cosmic process, separated and fallen from its origin in Supermind, the true nature of Matter and Life had become modified. This subordination of Matter and Life to the nature of Mind has, in fact, been a necessary phase for the full inter-play and development of the lower order of the evolution; but as a consequence there had also been the over-expansion of Mind's natural self-centredness which became the all-dominant principle in the way of the world's progress. And consequently the persistent factor of ego, as the centre of the individual's action, became the obstinate barrier to the evolution, and to earth's opening to the Light of the higher Power beyond Mind. Yet this condition, since it is rooted in Mind's fundamental lapse and separation from the divine Light, is not a permanent state of affairs for the earth-life; the way of its transformation was seen and indeed opened up by Sri Aurobindo. It is for man the mental being, through his growth in consciousness, to prepare himself for the full entry of the transforming Light of the Divine Power, which alone can change the world.

We can say therefore that because of mind's limitation the static, solid, impenetrable forms we perceive are a direct indication of the present range of our sense-perception. Science, indeed assures us that pure matter is itself a highly dynamic and fluid, though minutely organised, condition of substance; so that for man to even perceive directly the truth of this elemental fact would necessitate a far greater widening of his vision, as well as the development of a deeper insight to penetrate and comprehend the secret nature of things. When we become directly aware of the universal Energy as a unifying substratum or matrix, we also begin to realise the diversity of its forms,—the material, vital, mental and even supramental gradations. We

are then led to realise that this all-enveloping Energy is above all a secret Consciousness and not merely a mechanical Force,—but a Consciousness that is ever moulding out of itself diverse forms and grades of substance, while ever remaining in its true Nature the one divine creative Power that exists everywhere and in all things. From our present-day pragmatic standpoint, however, this conception of a cosmic, and at the same time supracosmic, Consciousness acting apart from one's own or the collective awareness is as yet foreign to our minds; largely because we have lost, in the course of the individual and narrowed ego development, the contact with the cosmic vision of Reality, such as the ancient cultures fostered. Thus it is not surprising that with a narrower vision and outlook man's present efforts to perceive the true objective reality have only resulted in a fragmented and indecisive picture of the world. In an attempt to arrive at a wholeness we try to explain the nature of things in terms of one exclusive principle. Scientific thought of the past hundred years, for example has swung between an explanation of the universe based on an unalterable necessity, and one based on chance. Whereas probability is the present supposed factor on which the universal laws depend, hitherto a rigid determinism was thought to be the fundamental law of the physical world. Here we are really witnessing the characteristic indecisive swing of mind as it oscillates between two extremes, —a fact which only serves to indicate the real fixity of mind and its resistance against any attempted change in its central standpoint. It is this reaction which stands in the way of mind's widening beyond its present pivot and ego-centre.

II

Let us try to examine, by way of digression, some aspects of the visual sense in man, in order to see the present limitation and the possible line of development of the senses as a whole. Our attempt to explain this mechanism, in terms of current science and common experience, may be stated as follows. When light vibrations of a certain range of oscillation strike the retina of the eye, myriads of nerve-endings are stimulated according to the oscillations carried by the light-waves; and these differing stimuli give us a sense of colour and form. In the nerve-fibres these vibrations become vital impulses which are transmitted to the appropriate centres in the brain. Here the vital impulses are received as a series of signals or rapid punches, and this instigates mental perception. By the signal received and the vital impulse imparted, the sense-mind can contact the object or its image directly,

using the line of the receptive physical vibration as its immediate path of contact. In this way the sense-mind actually forms its mental impression of things, though we should note that the direct contact of sense with the actual object only occurs when the latter is sufficiently close. Beyond a certain distance (perhaps even fifty yards from the observer) the real or rather vital impression ceases and we contact only the projected image which has been formed by the mind according to the physical vibrations received by it. This means that only within a comparatively short range of the individual can the vital impulse project the sense sufficiently to contact the object directly, although it should be observed that the mind-energy itself, apart from the sense-channel and the vital impulse, is not restricted to this limitation of distance. The main limitation of mind lies rather in its surface awareness, in its habit of concentrating on fragments as wholes, and above all in creating the unreal separation between the subjective and objective experience.

It is a matter of common experience that distant objects are perceived by us only as detached images; it is only closeness that brings with it the intimacy of perception, and even near objects viewed through a medium, such as a glass-window, lose their intimacy of direct contact, and appear to us detached or cut off, as they indeed are, from the sense-mind's vital contact with them. We must note, however, that the above presentation of sense-perception is necessarily only a simplified one-track version of it, for one perceives a whole diversity of objects simultaneously, and in their proper spatial relation, within the ordinary eliptico-sectional field of our vision. Mind-energy receives all these impressions separately and fragmentarily, and yet perceives them in a proper relation and perspective,—which is a forceful indication of mind's power of co-ordination and perspective. It is thus that the mind builds up a composite picture of the world, aided by the limited range of its sensory function. But obviously mind's sensibility has yet to be further extended by a freer and more direct use of its own potential powers, opened out by the penetrating Light of the divine Power itself.

We have to see how far our sensory relation with the world can be extended so that a natural insight or feeling-into things is not separated from a true detached vision of the whole. In this respect we have to remember that it is in consequence of the sense-mind's practical utility that the ego has interposed the false idea that the sensory function is our sole link with the outer reality; and by this means the ego seeks to maintain its dominant control over man's means of knowing. We are not only made dependent on the

information of the senses for our knowledge, but the senses themselves have been made the slave of the ego's pleasure, and are even discouraged from developing beyond their present limited power. Our ethics in fact have been largely built up around the need to counteract this misuse of the senses, by instigating a proper guidance for them; but since this endeavour has been chiefly based on the principle of suppressing or curtailing their function, it has not struck sufficiently deep to change the ego itself, which is the real core of the difficulty. The obvious cure is to widen one's consciousness, and hence broaden the range of perception from the centre of one's being, and see the senses themselves in their proper relation to knowledge.

The senses are essentially instruments, and for their right use in a Divine-directed endeavour it is essential that they become channels of a higher and wider range of awareness, such as it is the goal of both spiritual and worldly endeavour to accomplish. By this opening we should acquire a deeper perception which reaches more intimately and directly to the underlying origin of things. Just as a mentalised sense gives us a purely mental picture, so a spiritualised sense would reveal to us the true spiritual content of things. What we at present refer to vaguely as intuition is but a step towards this spiritualised perception, whereby the sense-mind would become a freer and more plastic instrument for man's relation with the world. Our aim would not be to suppress or distort the utility of the senses, since they are our immediate earthly link with the world, but rather to train and purify their responses by the widening and opening of mind to the higher Truth. Thus our senses would become the subtilised instruments of a new consciousness, that radiates from the awakened soul or psychic being in us. The illumined and intuitive levels of mind would more readily open in response to the natural and unrestrained growth of the soul. Little by little the senses would discard their attachment to egoistic pleasure, especially those centred on the lower vital desires and sensational stimulations. For these habits only serve to keep the senses tied hypnotically to a fixed narrow orbit of action and reaction. Yet they cannot remain so while ever the light of Truth is steadily focussed on their every activity, and where there is the firm and quiet resolve, the inner aspiration to transcend these lower attachments.

In the past there have been two valuable aids, as we have observed, in the elevation of man's sensibility: one in the artistic field—training the senses to an appreciation of the higher aesthetic experiences; and the other in a growing scientific knowledge and inquiry that strives towards a more accurate and exact objective picture of reality, through the disciplining of the senses,

and through a careful and detailed observation. It is all the more necessary, therefore, that we, in this modern age, admit a deepr and more rarefied sense awareness to enter into our scientific inquiry and our artistic pursuits, and not seek to depend on external instruments however refined and sensitive they may be made. A composite and global vision is the essential basis for us, if we are to widen our point of observation, and integrate our present scattered knowledge into a co-ordinate pattern. This introduces the necessity of incorporating a third powerful lever for the advancement of man,—that of spiritual knowledge, whose first and fundamental concern is to inculcate a higher perception as the basis of man's vision and outlook. And this indeed is the more secure basis, both for man's advancement in science and for the necessary widening and heightening of his artistic outlook.

Thus we reach the point where as a normal part of one's training and education one has to learn to be able to control and be ever vigilant in the use of the sense faculties. All our reactions of sense, and the impressions they carry, must be constantly subject to a discrimination that knows and can accept or reject, above the sway of the sense-mind that ordinarily reacts undiscerningly. Even Reason and an ethical code of behaviour cannot adequately fill in the need here, since the former is itself an instrument and not the true possessor of knowledge, while the latter has become more of a restraining and negative force rather than a positive integrating factor. It is only a higher and illumined sphere of knowledge beyond the intellect, that can exercise in us the necessary enlightenment, and give us the mastery and discernment to instigate the proper use of sense impressions. A two-fold process is necessary for us,—on the one hand a spiritualisation of mind through the higher illumined knowledge, and on the other the progressive emergence of soul which is indeed urging to become active in us. The spiritualised mind, detached from the strong pull of the ego, would thence open more and more to the luminous plane of the divine Truth.

We have to remember, however, that the training and elevation of the senses are but themselves the preparation for a higher Power to enter and become operative in the earth-field. For mind alone cannot create or bring forth a higher Reality; but by preparing itself and becoming aware of that Reality it can be the faithful instrument of it,—which is its true role. At the same time the surrender of mind's power to the spiritual Reality is the most powerful uplift in the growth of the inner spirit, which brings the Reality of the Divine Consciousness into one's very life and being. By this opening and spiritualisation of the mind, the basis would be laid here in the

world for the full emergence of the psychic being to bring, in its own way, a new perception, centred on the Reality of the Divine's Omnipresence. We should possess a universal relation with all things and beings; and this would form the needed and natural basis for our advancing knowledge and ever-extending inquiry.

N. PEARSON.

A thought is an arrow shot at the truth; it can hit a point, but not cover the whole target. But the archer is he who will be satisfied with his success to ask anything farther.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE THREE CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL SEEKERS

IN a short foreword to the French original of her Prayers and Meditations, the Mother says,

"This book is composed of extracts from a journal written during years of intensive yogic discipline. It may serve as a guide to three main categories of seekers: those who have embarked on self-conquest, those who have the will to find the path leading to the Divine, and those who aspire to consecrate themselves more and more to the Divine Work."

The first category, according to the Mother, comprises those who have undertaken the work of self-conquest. Self-conquest means two things: 1) conquest of the lower self of ignorance and desire and suffering, and 2) attainment or recovery of the true Self, which is infinite and immortal and radiant with knowledge. "Know thyself", atmanam viddhi, is the recurring refrain of all spiritual teaching, whether it is Eastern or Western. Socrates insists on it no less than the Upanishads and the Gita. Indeed, whatever may be our intellectual knowledge and attainments, however much we may be wise and successful in the ways of the world, so long as we do not know the essence, the deathless reality, of our being, we are in ignorance, and have to undergo the inevitable fate of ignorance,—struggle and suffering and spiritual obscurity. That all in us,—our body, life and mind, our thoughts and ideas and emotions and sensations—are in constant flux, even a moment's calm reflection will convince us; and to remain identified with this stream of impressions and energies, as the Buddha imaged it, is to be condemned to the fate of the stream itself, which is ceaseless formation, mutation and disintegration. It is this flowing stream that we call our personality, a fragile figure of inconstant elements; and we feel that we die when these elements dissolve and disperse, and we live so long as they maintain a semblance of continuity.

In spite of all the phenomenal achievements of science, the mystery of life and death still eludes its grasp. And what it cannot grasp, it has the

facile habit of denying altogether. If there are any suprasensible realities or anything in man that survives the death of his body, it seems to assert, they must come within its purview and satisfy its material tests. The subtle must shed its subtlety and appear in the garb of the gross, if it wants to be sure of its own existence and registered as a genuine scientific reality!

But faith in immortality is ingrained in the heart of man. It is not an intellectual, but an instinctive faith, which may be overlaid by mental scepticism or repelled by the materialistic denial, but can never be snuffed out for ever. The dread of death, so universal in humanity, is an inverse reflex of this faith in immortality. Who wants to die? Not even the most wretched of men; for, behind all his wretchedness, there lurks the hope of a new dawn and the passing of the night of his miseries. This hope is essentially a child of the faith in self-persistence. Even when one invokes or courts death, one does not really seek an utter self-extinction, but consciously or subconsciously, longs for a better life, either here again or elsewhere, under more favourable and harmonic conditions. This instinctive clinging to life and the perennial youth of hope in the heart of man witness to a truth beyond themselves and are an obscure but undeniable hint of immortality.

But man must know what is immortal in him, and but for which this faith in self-persistence would not have been. That which is immortal in mortals is hidden deep within them, covered up, layer upon layer, with the teguments of the surface self. "One must separate him with patience from one's own body, as one separates from a blade of grass its main fibre," says the Kathopanishad. One has, first, to distinguish between one's changing outer personality and one's changeless spiritual being, one's essential self and one's expressional or instrumental self. And once this distinction is definitely made, one has to discover one's essential Self and live in it, unaffected by the mutations of the instrumental self. The essential Self is, as the Gita puts it, unborn and permanent and eternal, the ancient of days, indestructible even in the destruction of the body; and to live in this Self is to be immortal.

The way to the recovery and realisation of this essential Self of man lies through a renunciation of all egoistic desires and attachments, physical, vital and mental, and a shifting of the habitual poise on the surface to a new poise in the depths of the being. With a clear perception of the impermanence of the outer personality, we must identify ourselves with that luminous centre in us round which our expressional personality develops and functions

and disintegrates and grows again. By love and aspiration, by concentration and meditation, by renunciation and detachment, by an unflagging labour of self-discipline and self-mastery, we must liberate ourselves from the fetters of our constructed self and unite with our soul or timeless Self. There is an almost complete unanimity among the religions and the schools of yoga in regard to the basic method of self-realisation, though some of them consider this realisation, and the others do not, as the highest aim of spiritual life and the crown of human achievement.

"The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother" throws considerable light on this path and provides ample sustenance to this category of spiritual seekers. It inculcates the right spirit of meditation and contemplation, teaches the most effective way of introspection and self-discipline, and imparts a vivid sense of the peace and patience without which no spiritual endeavour can bear any abiding fruit. Regarding the danger of the material thoughts obsessing the minds of those who aspire to realise their Self and attain a perfect self-conquest, it says, "The tide of material thoughts lies always in wait for the least weakness, and if we relax our vigilance even for a moment, if we are negligent, to however small an extent, it rushes forward and invades us from all sides, submerging sometimes under its heavy flood the result of innumerable efforts. Then the being enters into a sort of torpor, its physical needs of food and sleep increase, its intelligence is obscured, its inner vision is veiled, and in spite of its feeling little real interest in these superficial activities, they occupy it almost exclusively. This condition is very troublesome and fatiguing, for nothing is more fatiguing than thoughts about material things, and the wearied mind suffers like a caged bird unable to spread its wings, yet aspiring for the power to take its free flight."[1]

It is not enough for the aspirants of self-conquest to remain concentrated on the soul and leave the outer nature to its obscure movements; for, unless the nature is sufficiently purified and quieted, it will be difficult for them even to meditate with any sustained concentration,—the turmoil of the unregenerate nature will drag their consciousness out, or even prevent its going within. The difficulties of the nature have to be faced with a calm courage and conquered. They have to be carefully and vigilantly watched, and not to be treated lightly or indifferently; for, introspection will reveal to us that most of the difficulties we meet with in spiritual life come from

[1] Prayers and Meditations of the Mother—Jan. 4, 1914

within and not from without. "It is in oneself that there are all the obstacles, it is in oneself that there are all the difficulties, it is in oneself that there is all the darkness and ignorance."[1] The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother abounds in such invaluable instructions for those who aim at self-conquest.

The second category of spiritual seekers consists of those who seek the Divine. These seekers feel that self-conquest is not the highest attainment, but only the first decisive step. The lower, empirical self has, indeed, to be conquered and the essential Self has to be realised, for that is man's real Self; but until the Divine is realised, the fundamental unity of existence cannot be experienced, and the world remains unexplained and unpossessed. An irrepressible aspiration for the Being of our being, a consuming thirst for the bliss of His embrace, impels these seekers beyond self-conquest. They cannot rest content with the peace and silence of the soul or even its beatific freedom; they feel within them what the author of the Cloud of Unknowing calls "the naked intent stretching into God." It is a mystic faith and mysterious longing that cannot be quenched by any spiritual experience, short of a total union with the Divine. By the way of knowledge or devotion or service, or by a combination of them all, they advance towards the Supreme Being and strive to unite with Him. Personal salvation appears to them, not as an end to be pursued, but as a state attainable by the Grace of God and utilisable as a stable basis for the enjoyment of divine union. For, he, who is subject to the mechanism of the lower nature, cannot certainly qualify for the bliss of the divine union. It is, in fact, the liberated soul or the psychic being alone that can seek the Divine with an inextinguishable passion; the mind and the life parts of man are much too attached to the appearances and surface realities of existence to conceive of themselves such a self-denying aspiration. When the soul is awakened and turned, not towards the immutable Impersonal, but towards the Divine, it evinces a one-pointed devotion for Him and an intense aspiration for a union with Him. For it, the world exists only in and for the Divine, and all the relations of life appear but as ways and means of communing with Him. Its constant cry is, "I desire not that which comes from Thee, but only I desire Thee, O sweetest Love!"[2]

In the Mother's Prayers and Meditations there are numerous expressions

[1] *Prayers and Meditation of the Mother*—March 1, 1914

[2] St. Catherine of Genoa

of this all-consuming hunger for the Supreme. Indeed, there is not a singl Prayer in which this hunger, this flaming aspiration, this transformin passion does not break out in a splendour of rapturous accents.

"O Thou, who art the sole reality of our being, O sublime Master o love, Redeemer of life, let me have no longer any other consciousness tha of Thee at every instant and in each being. When I do not live solely wit Thy life, I agonise, I sink slowly towards extinction; for Thou art my onl reason for existence, my one goal, my single support..."[1]

"O Lord, my mind drawn inward and my heart at peace, I approac Thee and all my being is filled with Thy divine Presence; grant that I ma see only Thee in everything and that all may shine with Thy divine Light."

This aspiration finds perhaps its sublimest expression in the Prayer o May 2, 1914:

"Beyond all human conceptions, even the most marvellous, beyond al human feelings, even the most sublime, beyond the most magnificen aspirations and the purest elans, beyond Love, Knowledge and the Unit of the Being, I would enter into a constant communion with Thee, O Lord Free from all trammels, I shall be Thyself; it will be Thou seeing the worl through this body; it will be Thou acting in the world through thi instrument.

"In me is the calm serenity of perfect certitude."

As one reads these Prayers, one feels swept into an inexpressible stat of spiritual exaltation in which one's whole being thrills with a luminou ecstasy. As if liberated from all bondage of the world, one seems to lov and long for nothing but the Divine, the Eternal, who is experienced a the sole Reality of all existence. The intensity of aspiration that the Prayer breathe and the absoluteness of surrender that they mirror have a ra magnetic force that defies all comparison and analysis,—they are an i resistible spiritual infection. One feels like crying out with the Mothe "I would conquer Thee whatever may be the effort necessary for that.... And yet the Prayers contain something more.

The third and last category of spiritual seekers is composed of those wh have found the Divine, but who yet "aspire to consecrate themselves mo

[1] Jan. 24, 1914
[2] April 8, 1914

and more to the Divine Work." This is a very slender category, hewing its way to the realisation of its aim through an almost virgin field. The spiritual traditions of the past are mostly woven round the ideal of personal salvation or that of an absorbed union with the Divine in the nuptial chamber of the human heart, or of a traceless self-annulment in the Impersonal; they throw very little light on this difficult path of the Divine work. It is true that names like those of Janaka and Ajatashatru stand out in the history or prehistory of spiritual achievements as shining examples of an attempt at the reconciliation of Spirit and Matter, but what was really achieved was a strenuous adjustment and accommodation between the two polar principles, rather than a triumphant fusion and union for a perfect manifestation of the Divine on earth. The Divine Work that the Mother speaks of is a different thing altogether, and a far greater, if much more difficult, attainment. It is a revelatory or manifestational work demanding for its perfection, not only a union with the Divine in the depths of the being, but a constant and dynamic union even in the outer nature. It is not the product of a mere combination of Mary and Martha, the static and the dynamic principles of the Spirit, as we find brilliantly illustrated in the lives of some of the Western mystics, like St Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Genoa etc., who represent remarkable achievements of the theopathetic life. Higher than personal salvation, greater even than the ineffable bliss of the absorbed divine union and more luminously creative and transformative than the mere combination of the static and the active principles of the soul, is the Divine Work the Mother holds up before us as the highest fulfilment of the liberated soul living in the Divine. It is a spontaneous fruition in man of the Divine Will to a victorious perfection in self-manifestation.

This category of spiritual seekers may be called Ishwarkoti, in the sense in which Sri Ramakrishna used the word, but with an important difference. They not only serve the Divine while living in Him, but they serve to manifest Him. This manifestation is the Divine Work, which presupposes the liberation and transformation, or, to be more precise, divinisation of the human nature itself. And it entails a considerable labour of purifying and converting each part of the being, even the gross material. The Divine Work cannot be carried out to perfection unless human nature has been converted into the Supernature or Para Prakriti.

The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother can be called a pealing anthem of the progress of the Divine Work. The key-note of the Mother's

aspiration is struck in the second Prayer of the book, dated the 3rd Nov. 1912:

"Thy Light is in me like a vivifying fire and Thy divine Love penetrates me: I aspire with all my being that Thou mayest reign as sovereign Lord in this body whose will is to become Thy docile instrument and Thy faithful servant."

This aspiration of the Mother is not that of a mere karmayogi or even of a God-drunk mystic seeking to serve the Divine by philanthropic or altruistic work, or to be moved by the divine Will as far as his human nature and the conditions of his life permit it. The Divine Work has at once a subjective and an objective aspect, involving the unveiling of the Supreme in oneself, that is to say, in one's soul and in one's triple nature of mind, life and body, by the complete extinction of the separative ego; and it cannot be accomplished except by a radical transformation of the whole nature. When the triple nature has become a transparent and plastic channel, the divine splendour floods the whole being and flows out to regenerate the world. In this great work of transfiguration, it is the body that offers the most stubborn resistance. Its grossness refuses to be refined and subtilised; its ready susceptibility to disease and decrepitude and death seem to persist ad infinitum. Since the days of the ancient mystic cults, no serious and sustained attempt has been made to transform the human body; it has rather been spurned as "the frail flesh" and deliberately neglected, if not always mortified. But it is an indispensable means of the Divine Work which the Mother envisages as the highest goal of human life. How then can it be transformed? How can its consolidated grossness and its unyielding resistance disappear, giving place to a pellucid suppleness and smiling docility? That which alone can break this resistance and effect a radical transmutation of the physical being is the highest Truth-Light and Truth-Force of the supreme creative Consciousness, *vijnanajyoti* and *vijnanashakti*. The descent of this Truth-Light and Truth-Force is, therefore, the first and most important condition of the Divine Work, and the complete transfiguration of the physical consciousness and the body its final preparation. That is why, in the Prayer quoted above, the Mother speaks of the body's will, as if it were an index to the achievement aspired for. If the physical being fails to reveal the light and love and beauty of the Divine, the manifestation can never be perfect, however great and glorious it may be in the depths of the being.

The Divine Work, as the Mother understands it, stems out of the plenitude of the divine union,—union in the soul, union in the mind, union in the heart, union in life and the will, and union in the very cells of the body. The Divine Work is, indeed, the Divine's own work, that is to say, the Work done by the Divine Himself through the surrendered and transformed human being. It is this Divine Work that gives the ultimate sense and significance to human life. And, besides, the divine union will not be divinely complete without reproducing itself in the human body in the form of the Divine Work. The Divine Work is the offspring of a dynamic union between the Divine and the human soul. It is a fruition of union, as some of the Western mystics describe it. But, we must remember, it is a fruition pregnant with an evolutionary meaning and a teleological purpose. And a perfection in this fruition is the secret sense of the unresting elan of universal life. Life yearns to become a Niagara of Light, and man a moving image of Eternity upon earth.

We can have some idea of the process and perfection of the Divine Work if we just study some of the utterances of the Mother in the Prayers and Meditations. Almost at the beginning of the book, the Mother says in her Prayer of Nov. 19, 1912, that she has "definitively found Thee (the Divine), and that the union was constant." The word she uses is "definitively", and not "definitely". She means to say that there can be no lapse from this union, which is final and secure—it is a fait accompli. And in many a subsequent Prayer she speaks of the fullness of her union and communion with the Divine. "Lord, Thou hast answered my prayer; Thou hast granted me what I have asked from Thee; the "I" has disappeared... Thou hast taken my life and made it Thine; Thou hast taken my will and hast united it to Thine; Thou hast taken my love and identified it with Thine; Thou hast taken my thought and replaced it by Thy absolute Consciousness." And yet, in the same breath, she speaks of the resistance of Matter and the distance that separates her from the integral union she aspired to realise. Even after the "definitive and constant" union, she says that "this state of union is poor and precarious compared with that which it will be possible for me to realise tomorrow." The paradox is resolved if we remember what the Mother says in several of her Prayers, that the Divine Work can be perfectly accomplished only when the divine union has become integral, that is to say, complete and constant from the remotest depths and heights of the being to its outermost peripheries. She describes or rather transcribes in the Prayers the various stages of trans-

formation through which the being has to pass in order to achieve this integral union for the Divine Work.

Therefore, for those who aspire to be perfect instruments of the Divine Work, self-conquest cannot be the last word of realisation, nor can they remain content with the rapt ecstasy of the divine union in the recesses of their being. They aspire to fulfil the mission of the human birth, which is the manifestation of the Divine here, in this material world. This is the Divine Work to which the Mother calls us, the Work of all works, the supreme fulfilment of the soul's highest aspiration.

RISHABHCHAND

The sign of dawning Knowledge is to feel that as yet I know little or nothing; and yet, if I could only know my knowledge, I already possess everything.

SRI AUROBINDO

REVIEWS

Psychology and Art of Education, by Dr. T. V. S. Rao, Publication of the International Institute of Practical Psychology and Mental Hygiene, Madras. pp. XX plus 419 (with many illustrations and diagrams), price Rs. 7/-

The book is a most comprehensive writing on the subject of education. It is also the publication of an Institute devoted to an ideal and is the embodiment of the life experience of a person, who is the Institute's director and evidently a faithful servant of the ideal. The International Institute of Practical Psychology and Mental Hygiene seems to have been inspired by a perception and faith in the psychological way of considering and handling human life and its relations. A very true perception indeed! How could a physical and objective-material way of treating man be satisfactory! Man is essentially as he lives within himself; and the conditions of this living naturally determine his well-being. His springs of action too are within him. The psychological approach to understand him and to modify his life and raise its level of well-being is evidently the most rational way and we most heartily welcome the formation of this Institute and wish it all success. Its aims too are very comprehensive. In a general way, it seeks "to deal with, from the psychological point of view, the problems of individual and social life, the problems of national and international relations and the problems of unity, peace and goodwill among the people of India and in the world around us." (p. 387) In a more detailed way it seeks to bring together psychologists from the west and the east for obtaining a fuller psychological light on practically all problems affecting human life. These problems include training for national service, leadership, business, child upbringing, spiritual and religious life, non-violence, art-creation, and the like.

The Institute has, indeed, a very ambitious outlook and programme. But the indispensability of the psychological point of view regarding problems of human life, which the Institute represents is a truth

we heartily endorse. The science of psychology is essentially the science of the future. A fuller and a truer understanding of the human personality and of the dynamics of its action and change will obviously be the new knowledge with which a really better world could be created. However, we cannot forget that western psychology is as yet a very young science and that its knowledge of personality is still very inadequate. We have so far barely observed that personality is unique, but we do not know the conditions and the cause of this wonderful quality. And the creative process and the genius are yet enigmas. Without them our knowledge of personality is reduced to a description and classification of the superficial reactions. We cannot, therefore, too confidently insist on our western knowledge of human personality and seek to apply it to our problems. Therefore, while pursuing the psychological approach, we have constantly to seek to increase our psychological insight into personality. And in this connection the various systems of yoga of the east, which carried on such relentless introspection, can contribute substantially to the widening and deepening of our knowledge of personality. This knowledge, when acquired, will help to create the maturer psychology of tomorrow, which will be relatively surer of its field and subject-matter.

In pursuance of the psychological viewpoint espoused by the Institute, the author has very rightly sought to base his education on psychology. About one-fourth the book is devoted to a treatment of the "Functions of the Mind and Their Development." This is a purely psychological account and serves, indeed, as a very useful basis for a discussion and valuation of the problems of "Knowledge", "Teaching Methods", "Discipline", "School Organisation and Curriculum", and "Recent Educational Experiments and Plans in Free India". This psychological portion is a very good summary of the best of the western psychology. It avoids extremist positions and takes, on the whole, a synthetic view. Mind is considered an 'organism', "a form of life which grows and develops by its own inherent activity." The self-activity of the pupil thus becomes a basic psychological truth. The older education took the child's mind as a sort of wax or clay which was to be moulded by the teacher. This view of the mind our author very rightly rejects. Mental development is a progressive "adjustment to environment." The author elaborates, "The more numerous and the more precise the similarities and the differences noticed, and the more orderly and systematic the combinations made among the sensations, the pleasure-pains and the impulses,—the more comprehensive are the ideas, the loftier

the emotions, and the nobler are the resolutions and acts." (p. 18) The unconscious and the process of repression too are duly recognised and rightly assessed for education.

Now all this is very good and if the present reviewer had not interested himself in Indian Psychology and, in particular, the psychological principles of Sri Aurobindo's system of Integral Yoga, he would have considered it a very fine psychological foundation for an educational scheme and system, whether in India or elsewhere. But he has progressively attained to a view that personality is not all a matter of adjustments to the environment. It is something in itself. To Indian psychology, it has been the soul, an in-itself conscious principle, which is the individuality of the person, and the mind a form of consciousness, *Bahirmukha*, outward-turned, which is an instrumentation for external action and relations. Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is a practical discipline, which enables an individual to make an experience of the inner principle of existence and appreciate the true nature and function of the normal mind. Among the western psychologists too, C.G. Jung by a variety of ways has been led to affirm a 'centre' in personality. He says, "If we survey the situation as a whole, we come to the inevitable conclusion—at least in my opinion—that a psychic element is present that expresses itself through the tetrad. This conclusion demands neither daring speculation nor extravagant phantasy. If I have called the centre the 'self', I did so after ripe reflection and a careful assessment of the data of experience as well as of history."[1]

Now if a soul, an in-itself conscious principle, is the central governing fact of personality and the mind a particular instrumentation of it like the senses and the limbs, then education will have to be differently oriented. A cultivation of the senses and a regulation of external relations and reactions will yet have to be attended to but the main purpose of education will have to be an activisation and manifestation of the inner soul of man, a bringing into play of its inherent light, its integral will and its finer emotion of self-existent delight and love.

An education that does not know the qualities of soul-experience struggles in vain to achieve the highest qualities of character and personality. Madam Montessori, for instance, seeks to evolve a personality that will be "the master of the circumstances." She has obviously seen the true need of the times with the eye of a genius. Man is not the master of his circumstances and he should be so. But if he is in his nature only a correlative factor

[1] The Integration of the Personality, p. 198.

of environment and his development consists in just a better organisation of his reactions to the environment, then how can we possibly expect that through education he could become a master of his circumstances. The whole of scientific civilisation of today is unfortunately working under this illusion. While evidently seeking to become master of nature, we are getting enslaved to it. Nature, its laws and the technological inventions based on them govern us by their necessities. We cannot free ourselves from these necessities, put a limit to the influence of science or direct it to other ends we might choose for it. But the fault is not of science or of scientific progress. The fact is that mind in its nature is a system of correlations and correlativities. It is enmeshed and caught up in its relations with external nature. It is not a free agent. If we could release into life the qualities of soul-experience, the same science and scientific civilisation will assume a new form. The soul is a self-existent principle of personality and it is through the development and expression of it in life that the quality of masterliness can be achieved. Madam Montessori seeks masterliness and so does education generally. But how can this true vision become a fact without the necessary perception of that which is by its nature free in us and which by its expression and manifestation can create a large space of freedom around us.

Indian education, in particular, cannot afford to ignore this essential truth of personality. The best traditions of Indian education bear it out even today and our author is fully aware of them. His appraisals of teaching methods and other educational issues reveal an appreciation of many spiritual truths of human life, which have afforded us a special satisfaction.

The author's treatment of the problem of discipline is particularly illuminating. Discipline is indeed "that orderliness whose essense is self-control....It concerns itself with child development, with the formation of character. It teaches the child what to love and what to avoid. It lays the foundations of self-inspection and self-control" (p. 177). And in connection with the method a teacher may employ for encouraging the spirit of discipline, the author says, "It should always be borne in mind that, whatever be the method he adopts, the teacher should always try to secure the confidence and affection of his pupils. There is no light without love." (p. 192)

The last part of the book, dealing with the recent educational experiments and plans in Free India, is particularly happy reading. It gives at one place the various original and creative attempts made here in the field of education.

We learn of the educational vision of Tagore and its realisation in Vishwa-Bharati, of Jamia Millia and the devotion and dedication of Dr. Zakir Hussain, of the Besant Theosophical School and the Kalakshetra and the vision and work of Dr. Arundale and Shrimati Rukmini Devi and in the end of the Basic Educational Scheme of Wardha. The Sargent Scheme as a bold attempt to tackle the national education of the country also comes for a consideration along with the above indigenous creations. It is most delightful to see the rich creative elements of these efforts and, in particular, notice how the 'Forest School' idea of ancient India has inspired and moved modern Indian educationists.

The author's personal emphasis is on Basic Education and he expects it to serve as a successful national educational scheme for India. He is, however, also conscious of certain inadequacies of the system. He feels that a better appreciation of the "Principles of Basic Psychology" is needed among the teachers. Surely we must seek to found ourselves on a growing knowledge of the psychology of the particular educational system as also of human personality as a whole and that will be the best assurance of the continuance of the creative element in our work. The growth of personality and in personality the growth of its creative part, the conscious soul, is obsviously the most important thing and a system will have to prove its worth by its ability to stimulate and bring into action that part. The principle of learning by doing is to us the essential truth of Basic Education. It is undoubtedly sound psychology of childhood and boyhood. But the nature of inner impulse to learn by doing should determine what a boy will do. If an occupation is not chosen by the impulse, it will not be able to afford the food it should for the inner impulse to grow. Above all, the national education of India should be able to recognise the soul in man and help in the growth and expression of this central truth of personality through its teaching, organisation and entire atmosphere. Without this we will be in daily practice denying the first basic truth of life, and *with this* we could easily evolve the high ideals of 'unity, peace and goodwill' and realise the quality of personality, which all education so deeply cherishes today.

We warmly recommend the book to all teachers and lovers of education and assure them of a wide information on psychology and the varied issues of educational theory and practice.

INDRA SEN

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